DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 457 327 CE 082 319

AUTHOR Sticht, Thomas G.

TITLE Learning To Read with Private Pete & Sailor Sam in World War II.

PUB DATE 2001-09-00
NOTE 5p.; "Celebrating Veteran's Day November 11, 2001."
PUB TYPE Historical Materials (060) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; Adult Education; *Adult Literacy; Armed Forces; Educational Benefits; *Educational History; *Functional Literacy; High Interest Low Vocabulary Books; *Literacy Education; *Military Personnel; Military Service; Military Training; Reading Instruction; Reading Materials; Reading Skills; Reading Strategies; Sight Method; Teaching Methods; *World War II; Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS Army; Navy

ABSTRACT

Since thousands of the men who entered military service during World War II were illiterate, the Army developed an "Army Reader," a four-part series featuring Private Pete, that led learners through literacy levels 1-4. Part 1 introduced Private Pete and talked about the things the men experienced when they entered the Army. Part 2 taught men how to write letters home, In Part 3, men were taught about their pay allowances for dependents, and the arithmetic they needed to deal with their everyday needs in the Army. Part 4 focused on teaching the men about good citizenship. All the materials were of a functional nature and were based on experiences most of the men had in their background. A "look-say" method was used in developing the Army program. A similar program, Navy Life Readers Books 1 and 2, featuring Sailor Sam, was developed for the Navy. Many of the men who learned to read and write, and their families, were grateful for the training. Today, all across America, hundreds of thousands of teachers and volunteers are struggling with inadequate resources to help millions of adults whose lies are stunted by the same kinds of literacy and learning problems that earlier affected hundreds of thousands of men in World War II. Business, government, and individuals all need to support adult literacy activities to reach the current generation of adults who lack literacy skills. (KC)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 457 327

Learning to Read With

Private Pete & Sailor Sam

In World War II

Thomas G. Sticht
International Consultant in Adult Education

September 2001

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
T. Sticht
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CE 082 319

Learning to Read With Private Pete & Sailor Sam In World War II

Across America in the early 1940s millions of children were learning to read with Dick and Jane. For many of these children, their dads had gone off to fight for the freedom Dick and Jane enjoyed as they played joyously around the house with their dog Spot and kitten, Puff. But before they got to the front lines, hundreds of thousands of fathers had to do what their children were doing. They had to learn to read and write.

Like their children with the Dick and Jane readers, the men in uniform who learned to read also had readers with fictional role models. In the Army men learned to read with Private Pete. In the Navy they learned to read with Sailor Sam.

Private Pete of the U. S. Army

This soldier is Private Pete.
He is in the barracks.

The *Army Reader* that men studied in the Special Training Units when they entered the Army had four parts. Part 1 introduced Private Pete and talked about all the things that the men experienced when they entered the Army and got their identification tags - "dog tags" as they came to be called.

Part 2 is entitled *Private Pete Writes a Letter* and it taught men how to write letters home. In Part 3, *The Army Pays Private Pete*, men were taught about their pay, allowances for dependents, and the arithmetic they needed to know to deal with their everyday needs in the Army.

Part 4 of the *Army Reader* focused on teaching the men about good citizenship. It discussed why they were in the Army and what they were fighting for.

All the materials were of a functional nature and were based on experiences most of the men in the Special Training Units had in their backgrounds, so they could build reading skills on the basis of their prior knowledge.

The functional approach was very similar to the approach used in the Dick and Jane readers for children. In those readers, care was taken to show children engaged in the kinds of activities with which most children were likely to be familiar. The idea was to

first teach a list of basic sight words that were carefully chosen to be meaningful to the children in terms of their every day experiences.

A similar approach to using the meaning-oriented, "word" or "look-say" method was used in developing the Army program. First soldiers were shown films strips that helped them develop a basic sight vocabulary of meaningful, Army-related words. Then they moved on to further word recognition and sentence reading and writing exercises.

The four parts of the *Army Reader* were carefully developed to start at about a 1st grade level and then each part went up a grade level until at Part 4, men could read and write with 4th grade ability. At that time they were graduated from the Special Training Units and sent to the replacement camps in preparation for battle.

Sailor Sam of the U. S. Navy

The Navy started literacy programs after those of the Army had been implemented. Like the Army, Sailor Sam also taught reading in a functional context using the Navy Life program consisting of *Navy Life Readers Books 1* and 2, and corresponding Navy Life workbooks.

Sam is a sailor.
He is in a big camp.
There are many sailors in the camp.

A similar approach to the Army's meaning-oriented, "word" or "look-say" method was used in developing the Navy program. The instructions for teachers in *Navy Life Reader Book 1* illustrate this approach:

> "Preliminary discussion of the pictures should be encouraged, both to promote concept development and to stimulate the student's oral language facility. The "Words for Study" pages, which illustrate picturable words, should be developed as a preliminary to reading the stories which follow. "

The goals of the Navy's reading program, like those of the Army program, were aimed at getting men to a functional level of reading as soon as possible. *The Navy Life Reader , Book 2* informed teachers that , "A reader for Navy men should, in addition to its other functions, help to create a permanent interest in reading, help the men to orient themselves in the meaning and objectives of the War, build morale, and create pride in the Navy." To do this, the *Navy Life Readers* presented stories of Sailor Sam and others in a variety of battle action scenarios at sea and ashore.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Celebrating Veteran's Day November 11, 2001

Voices of Gratitude For the World War II Literacy Programs

In his history of the Army Training of Illiterates in World War II, Samuel Goldberg talks about how much service men and their families appreciated the military's teaching their sons to read.

Writing in the July 1943 issue of *Our War*, a newspaper for the literacy students of World War II, Private Porfirio C. Gutierrez wrote: "This is my first letter in English. I have learned to read and write so that I can help protect our country."

A mother of a soldier wrote: "dear sir: I thank you all for Learning My child to read and wright I don't Know how to thank you all Because My child did not know nothing it is realy high apprishated Because I did not have the time to send him to school I did not have no husband I raised him from a Baby By my self and now I am in my old stage and that is all my help and I thank you and I thank you when you wrote me and siad My Boy did that I was so glad I did not Know what to do and I realy appreshated it. Very truly Yours, M___ W___"

Clearly, it takes more than guns, bullets and bombs to win a war. The teachers working through Private Pete and Sailor Sam gave *esprit de corps* and hope to hundreds of thousands of men and their families through the power of literacy.

We Need to Support Adult Literacy Work Today

Today, all across America, hundreds of thousands of teachers and volunteers are struggling with woefully inadequate resources to help millions of adults whose lives are stunted by the same kinds of literacy and learning problems that earlier affected hundreds of thousands of men in World War II.

In *Our War* for January 1944, the fictional Private Pete wrote a letter home saying:

"Dear Mom: ... I know what I am working for in this war. I want everyone to be able to go to any church he chooses. I want everyone to have enough to eat. I want to be able to say what I think without being afraid. I want the right to do what I like. But I want to do the right thing..." Love, Pete.

Even though we have come a long way since World War II, we still need lots of Private Petes and Sailor Sams (and all those grown-up Dick and Janes) out in homes, libraries, and classrooms helping millions of adults learn to read and write well enough to provide food for themselves and their families, to learn to speak up for their rights and to do what they need to do to fulfill their obligations as citizens to keep our nation strong and free. Business, government, individuals - we all need to support the activities of these adult literacy educators. We should do it because, like Private Pete, we want to do the right thing, and it *is* the right thing to do!

The Adult Education and Literacy System of the United States serves some 3 million adults a year in over 3,000 programs that operate according to the rules and regulations of the Workforce Investment Act, Title 2: Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998. Contact the President and your Congressional representatives and ask them to support the Adult Education and Literacy System. –Thomas G. Sticht, (619) 444-9133; tsticht@aznet.net